

BE PREPARED: 5 IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO BEFORE THE STORM

When a hurricane is approaching, there often isn't time to prepare your home properly to prevent damage. To keep your family and belongings safe this Hurricane Season, here are five important things you can do right now to protect your home.

1 Reinforce exterior doors

Exterior doors, regardless of the home's age, need reinforcement to handle strong winds. Installing a dead bolt is the best answer; even if you already have one, an additional bolt kit at the top and/or bottom of your doors will provide additional stability. Don't forget your garage door, too. It's traditionally the most vulnerable exterior door and easily overlooked. Reinforcement kits can be found at most home improvement stores for around \$500 and are easily installed.

2 Prepare your window covering

Your windows are vulnerable to numerous threats from a hurricane. Heavy winds can launch projectiles through the glass; changes in air pressure can cause bowing, rattling and cracks; rain can seep in at the edges. You can easily add weather stripping to improve the window seal and reduce leakage.

Most people immediately picture huge sheets of plywood, boarding up at the last minute. Avoid this by installing professional storm

shutters, which provide maximum security when needed. This can be cost prohibitive, though, so consider pre-cut plywood covers, sized to each window and labeled for easy installation when the storm is approaching. Whatever material you choose, be ready before the rush and avoid the huge lines for scarce plywood at the local lumber stores. And remember, taping up windows does nothing to protect your home.

3 Inspect and repair your roof

Your home is your biggest investment. Your roof is what protects your home, your family and many irreplaceable items inside. Most people never really look at their roof close enough to notice any damage or issues. Loose, missing or worn shingles, gaps in seals, and hail damage are very easy to overlook. These areas are vulnerable to leaks whenever a storm, small or large, comes along.

Proper roof maintenance is a necessity if you want to maintain your home's value and keep your family and belongings safe. A roof inspection is the best way to get peace of mind. Taking the time to have your roof evaluated by a professional contractor could save you a huge headache when a storm has passed and thousands have storm damage. Jasper Contractors offers free shingle and tile roof inspections and is equipped with a highly trained team.

If your roof has existing damage, you may even qualify for a new roof.

4 Prepare for loss of utilities

The most common immediate fallout from a hurricane is the loss of electricity. Before the storm arrives, turn your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest settings. This helps your food last much longer without power. Consider a generator and room air conditioner, if you choose to stay in place. Be sure to unplug appliances, especially TVs and computers, to avoid power surges or lighting strikes. Before the storm, locate your Main Electrical Panel and know how to turn off power to your entire home.

You should also know how to turn off your main water valve. During and after a hurricane, there can be loss of pressure, pipe damage, or, most commonly, a contaminated water supply. A storm surge or flooding can affect fresh water, making it necessary to boil or decontaminate water before drinking or bathing. The best option is to prepare in advance, by storing one gallon of fresh water per person per day, for as many days as you can. Drinking water can be stored in bottles and coolers, but it is not recommended that you drink water stored in bathtubs. One great idea is to freeze water in bottles before the storm, so it can provide sanitized cooling for food, then melt into drinking water.

5 Have a place for everything in advance

Knowing where everything and everyone will be during the storm BEFORE the storm is crucial. Have a meeting place – inside the home for maximum structural protection (closet, bathroom) and outside the home in case of severe damage that forces evacuation (car, backyard). Gather important items like cell phones, wallets, important papers or medication, into one water-proof bag. Make a checklist and prepare in advance.

All loose items outside should have a predetermined place to weather the storm. Grills, patio furniture, plants, trash cans – all these and more need to have places they'll fit when the time comes. A garage, shed, covered patio, even the pool can be a good place to keep your belongings from flying loose, causing damage to your home.

Taking time now to organize, prepare and protect your home before a hurricane can pay huge dividends afterward. Saving time, money and inconvenience can be as easy as taking some simple actions now, like a roof inspection, storm shutters or garage door reinforcement, before it's too late.



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